

## Message Text

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42

ORIGIN SS-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /011 R

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DRAFTED BY: S/S-O: RKKUCHEL

APPROVED BY: S/S-O: ROLAND K KUCHELL

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL HOUSTON IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 046612

STADIS//////////

EXDIS TOSEC 07

FOL REPEAT OF SAIGON 2240 TO SECSTATE INFO PHNOM PENH

MAR 1

QTE:

S E C R E T SAIGON 2240

STADIS

EXDIS

FROM HABIB

E.O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PFOR, CB

SUBJ: CAMBODIAN DEFENSE

1. I DISCUSSED QUESTION OF MEKONG OPENING AND PHNOM PENH DEFENSE WITH  
AMBASSADOR DEAN AND GENERAL PALMER. THEY BOTH BELIEVE AND I AGREE  
THAT EFFORT TO OPEN MEKONG SHOULD BE POSTPONED IN FAVOR OF DEFENSE  
OF PHNOM PENH, PARTICULARLY TO ASSURE KEEPING POCHENTONG OPEN.

2. HOWEVER, IN DOING SO, FANK MUST RETAIN POSITION AT NEAK LUONG  
WHICH CAN BE RESUPPLIED AND SHOULD KEEP PRESENCE AS POSSIBLE

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ELSEWHERE SO AS NOT TO RELEASE KC FORCES ON MEKONG FOR USE

AGAINST PHNOM PENH.

3. THIS QUESTION CAME UP INDIRECTLY IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION I HAD AT LUNCH WITH ADMIRAL SARENDY, KHMER NAVY CHIEF, WHO IMPRESSED ME AS A MAN WHO KNOWS HIS BUSINESS. SARENDY MADE IT CLEAR HIS FORCES ARE WEAK ON RIVER, WHERE THEY HAVE SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES, AND NEED GROUND FORCES WHICH ARE NOT AVAILABLE TO CLEAR THE WAY. HE EMPHASIZED OBVIOUS IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING POCHENTONG OPEN AS HIGHEST PRIORITY.

4. FINALLY, SARENDY, FANK COMMANDER FERNANDEZ, US MISSION MILITARY AND CIVILIAN STAFF AND OTHERS WERE CONFIDENT THAT PHNOM PENH PERIMETER, INCLUDING POCHENTONG, COULD BE HELD IF US MATERIAL SUPPORT SUSTAINED. THIS JUDGMENT WOULD BE REINFORCED IF FORCES WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE BE USED IN ATTEMPTS TO PUNCH THROUGH ON THE MEKONG ARE INSTEAD USED AROUND PHNOM PENH.

5. IN SUM, I SEE NO NEED TO TRY TO OPEN MEKONG CONVOYS AT THIS TIME, IN FACE OF PRIORITY AND REQUIREMENTS FOR PHNOM PENH DEFENSE.

MARTIN UNQTE INGERSOLL

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